



PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS AND QUALITY OF MARITAL RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is a very important union between a man and women. There are several factors that can affect quality of marital relationship. The present paper attempts to explore various psychological and social factors that can impact marital relationship. Present paper is based on review method for which more than 30 research papers and articles were reviewed. Several psychological and social factors were identified through present analysis that impacts the quality of marital relationship among couples.

KEY WORDS: Psychosocial factors, marital quality, relationship, couples.

Marriage as a relationship is one of the deepest and most fulfilling of human relationships. It has existed in varying forms throughout the history of man, responding to the fundamental needs and social aspirations of each generation. It has different meanings and connotations. Marriage has been considered as an institution in which there is a union of man and woman, their bodies, minds and souls, emotions and desires. Looking from the biological point of view, marriage can be defined as a mechanism of regulation and control of biological reproduction. Thinking from the psychological aspect, marriage is an integral part of human existence. Human beings find their fulfillment as men and women. It fills the physical and psychological void which exists in human being, if they are alone.

Quality of marriage- The research in the area of marital relationship frequently utilizes concepts like marital success, satisfaction, consensus, companionship, or some such synonym reflective of quality of marital life. Spanier and Lewis (1980), in synonym reflective of quality of marital life, note that marital quality was the most frequently investigated phenomenon in the field of family studies. In that review, they say that the most important advancement was in operationalizing the construct by moving from a unidimensional to a multidimensional measure. They go on to list the correlates and predictors of the construct. Johnson et al (1986) suggest that the different measurements essentially tap only two distinct components of marital quality; Positive and Negative aspects. Thus QMR has been defined as relative presence and absence of positive and negative factors (Bradbury et al 2000). It includes five components of marital quality as marital happiness, interaction, disagreements, problems and instability.

Quality of marital relationship is a dynamic concept, as the nature and quality of people's relationships can change over time (Larson & Holman 1994). Spanier and Cole (1976) are of the opinion that marital quality is not only a subjective evaluation but also a process in a dyad. They included four aspects of marital quality as dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, dyadic affection, and dyadic satisfaction. Hughes et. al. (1992), included components of activities that a couple does together, consensus on topics, marital disagreement and companionship as factors of marital quality.

Psychological factors affecting marriage- A number of studies have examined which personality traits are most highly correlated with relationship satisfaction. For instance, low levels of negative personality traits such as neuroticism and negative emotionality have been consistently associated with self-reports of relationship quality and satisfaction (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Robins et al., 2002; Watson et al., 2000). A meta-analysis (Heller, Watson & Ilies, 2004) found that overall neuroticism is the strongest personality correlate of marital satisfaction.

Donnellan, Conger, Chalandra & Bryant (2004) findings suggest that agreeableness and openness deserve increased attention as significant correlates of close relationships.

Robins et al. (2002) found that positive emotionality was related to higher quality relationships and also low levels of negative relationship outcomes, such as self-reported conflict and abuse. Likewise, Watson et al. (2000) found that extraversion was associated with satisfaction in married couples and that conscientiousness and agreeableness were associated with satisfaction in dating couples. In another study (Botwin, Buss & Shackelford, 1997), conscientious wives had husbands who were more sexually satisfied and conscientious husbands had wives who were more generally satisfied with their relationships.

Kosek's (1996) in their analysis found that scores for all the personality domains were significant predictors of scores on marital satisfaction for both men and women, with agreeableness being the most robust. Bouchard et al., (1999) also came to the same conclusion that the self-reported and partner-reported personality traits were important predictors of self-reported marital adjustment in both men and women.

Past studies indicate that self-esteem is a factor that is effective in women's marital satisfaction rate as compared to men (Cohen et al, 2009). Several studies have documented a negative correlation between the self-esteem of men and women involved in committed romantic relationships and their reports of relationship conflict (Luteijn, 1994; Rusbult, Morrow & Johnson, 1987; Wiggins & Lederer, 1984).

Subota (2007) added to the understanding of the connection between personality, socio-demographic characteristics of spouses and the quality of marriage. From the measured socio-demographic characteristics, only the length of dating showed positive correlation with the evaluation of their marital quality, while children, financial independency upon their spouse, religion and national heterogeneity had negative correlation.

Social factors affecting marriage- Burley (1995) found a significant negative relationship between work-family conflict and marital adjustment. However, subjects who believed that their partners provided career social support experienced higher marital adjustment than those who felt little support. Likewise, subjects who spent an equitable amount of time performing household tasks experienced higher marital adjustment than those who felt that their partners spent an inequitable time in performing household tasks.

Larson et al., (1994) studied the relationship between perceived stress resulting from job insecurity and marital and family functioning. For wives, job insecurity stress was negatively related to their marital adjustment, family communication, family problem solving, clarity of family roles, and affective involvement. For husbands, job insecurity stress negatively affected their marital satisfaction and perceptions of general family functioning, family role clarity, and affective responsiveness.

The impact of marital duration on marital quality may also operate in different directions. Western studies generally find that marital quality declines over time, possibly because couples become less compatible or bored with each other over time (Umberson and Liu, 2005, Van Laningham, et al., 2001).

Bryant and Rand (1999) examined the relationship between various social network support and marital success of husbands and wives who had been married for an average of 20 years. The findings suggest that social support positively influence the long-term marital relationship.

The impact of marital duration on quality of marriage may also operate in different directions. Western studies generally find that marital quality declines over time, possibly because couples become less compatible or bored with each other over time (Umberson and Liu, 2005).

CONCLUSION:

For many people marriage begins as a source of satisfaction and fulfillment but ends as a source of frustration and despair. There are various factors that can impact quality of marital relationship among couples. Through present analysis we have identified some of the factors responsible for affecting quality of mar-

riage, these are personality variables like agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, self-esteem, economic conditions, age, education, children, income, Communication, time spending together, physical health, stress, religiosity and spirituality, duration of marriage, working status of couples, and social support.

Socio economic status is one important aspect which is changing very dynamically. People are migrating from one status to another in short span of time. In present society women are entering more and more in different work fields, which has brought a change in the traditional role and expectations between married couples. This change has brought an increase in the number of nuclear families. The number of divorces, people seeking marital counseling is also increasing. Working women often struggle with feelings of guilt at having made the choice to work outside the home. At the same time, men are adjusting to the fact that they are no longer the sole provider in the family. More studies focusing on dual working couples and factors affecting their quality of marriage should be carried out. Further research can be conducted to study the impact of duration as well as the impact of family systems on marriage. More cross cultural studies are required in order to compare the universal versus distinct patterns of marital quality across cultures.

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